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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 000514

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DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA  
BAGHDAD FOR DMCCULLOUGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PDP BACKING PRESIDENT FOR SECOND TERM

REF: A. ABUJA 482

[1](#)B. ABUJA 481

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) Deputy National Chairman Haliru Bello Mohammed told press on March 24 in Abuja that the party leadership will reserve the 2011 presidential ticket for current President Yar'Adua. Bello Mohammed explained that the President's seven point agenda (the program he announced at his 2007 inauguration) could not be implemented in a single four-year term. He stressed, however, that other party tickets, including in particular those for governors, are up for grabs. Also on March 24, PDP National Chairman Prince Vincent Ogbulafor told members of the House of Representatives at a meeting at the party's National Secretariat in Abuja that the party leadership is displeased with the high turnover rate of PDP senators and representatives in the National Assembly (NASS), noting that the trend must change. There was speculation that his statement meant that sitting PDP legislators would be guaranteed renomination "tickets" by the party, although this was not clearly stated.

[1](#)2. (C) Maurice Ekpenyong (strictly protect), Special Assistant to House Speaker Dimeji Bankole, told Poloff on March 25 that the PDP statements were part of the behind-the-scenes maneuvering in preparation for 2011 elections (see reftels). Ekpenyong maintained that each level of politician is trying to protect his own interest -- president, governors, and NASS members. Ekpenyong said senior PDP leadership confirmed that "automatic tickets" were not promised because of public commitments to rule of law and strengthening internal democracy; however, he told Poloff the PDP is using other means to ensure re-election for those in office. For example, he cited the dropping of the recommendations (from the Electoral Reform Committee) that the Chairman and most of the members of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) be chosen by the National Judicial Council rather than the President, and that the State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs -- which are now chosen by the Governors) be abolished. Ekpenyong maintained that presidential appointment of the INEC Chair assures the President's re-election and the continued existence of SIECs gives the governors a similar assurance.

¶3. (C) Comment: As reported in reftels, Nigeria's politicians are definitely involved in pre- 2011 election politicking, with the clear goal for those in office of remaining in office. Despite concerns about Yar'Adua's health and the general lethargy of his administration, it appears those close to him see the importance of maintaining at least the possibility that he will remain in office -- if only to prevent the appearance that the administration is already a lame duck. End Comment.

¶4. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.  
SANDERS